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Notes on New Testament Passages.

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I. ON THE AORIST ἐδόκησα IN MARK i. 11 AND PARALLELS.

THIS aorist Burton classifies as "an Inceptive Aorist referring to some indefinite, imagined point of past time at which God is represented as becoming well pleased with Jesus. But since this point is not thought of as definitely fixed, English idiom requires a Perfect tense. It may be described, therefore, as an Inceptive Aorist equivalent to an English Perfect, and may be rendered, *I have become well pleased*. This, however, can only be a vivid way of saying *I am well pleased*. If, then, this view is correct, the rendering of the English versions is a free but substantially correct paraphrase. A true Perfect would affirm the present state of pleasure, and imply the past becoming pleased. The aorist affirms the becoming pleased and leaves the present pleasure to be suggested."¹

No one doubts that Professor Burton thoroughly understands the aorist tense, and accurately defines the elusive limit where it ceases to be an Aorist and becomes a Present or a Perfect. But understanding of the tense, even by an eminent grammarian, is apt to be more or less affected by his understanding of the sense, and in the present instance, sense and tense stand in relations of reciprocal determination.

If the sense be simply 'a vivid *I am well pleased*,' and the English versions really give "a substantially correct paraphrase," this use of the Aorist will doubtless not be unexampled in the New Testament; the repeated ἡκούσατε of the Sermon on the Mount would perhaps be a parallel. Though, I confess, "the act of becoming well pleased" strikes me as rather a difficult kind of "act" to conceive of as distinct from simple choosing. When we attempt to thus distinguish it we approach dangerously near a denial of the canon of Winer:

¹ *New Testament Moods and Tenses*, 55 c.

"There is no passage in the New Testament where the Aorist can be shown with certainty to stand for the Perfect."² Yet I judge it to be one of the merits of Professor Burton's rightly admired book to have shown that the New Testament writers do not confuse, but still clearly and accurately maintain the distinctions of the Greek tenses.

Admittedly, then, if the sense will permit, we should hold to the primary significance of the Aorist, and not shade off toward that of Present or Perfect where no occasion exists. My contention is that, in the present instance, no such occasion does exist; but that if we take lexicon and concordance as our authorities for the sense, instead of the English versions, we shall get quite a different idea of it; one which, instead of leading to a tense-construction unusual if not actually strained, makes the distinction between a true Perfect and a true Aorist which Professor Burton so happily expresses, exactly fit the case.

Wherever used of God throughout the New Testament the verb *εὐδοκεῖν* seems to denote his sovereign, inscrutable decree, his divine *placuit, sic volo, sic jubeo*. That which is otherwise unaccountable is declared to be "the good pleasure of God." The substantive *εὐδοκία* is the equivalent of the Hebrew *רצון* in the Old Testament generally. Specifically in the passage on which that of Mt. 3¹⁷ is based (Is. 42¹⁻⁴, *רצתה נפשי*), this stem is used. Cf. Gal. 1¹⁵. *Εὐδοκεῖν* is used in Lk. 12³² of the sovereign, unconstrained grace of God in giving the kingdom to the little flock who have no merit to deserve it. "It pleased the Father to give you the kingdom," *εὐδόκησεν ὁ πατὴρ ὑμῖν δοῦναι τὴν βασιλείαν*. In 1 Cor. 1²¹ it is used of the inscrutably wise decree of God, which is incomprehensible to human wisdom. In Gal. 1¹⁵ it denotes Paul's humanly unpreconceivable call to preach the gospel. Colossians 1¹⁹ seems to me to contain a reference to the very event under consideration, *ἐν αὐτῷ εὐδόκησεν πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα κατοικῆσαι*, and obviously refers to an *act*, not a *condition*. The other passages in which *εὐδοκεῖν* occurs in the New Testament either have men for the subject (though even in these cases generally with the sense of a free act of the sovereign will; so Rom. 15^{26f}, the unconstrained gift of the churches in Macedonia and Achaia; 2 Cor. 5⁸ 12¹⁰, 1 Thess. 2⁸ 3¹, 2 Thess. 2¹², unconstrained choice), or are quotations, and so not directly available. Under this head, however, we ought perhaps to note as a possible exception in 1 Cor. 10⁵, *οὐκ ἐν τοῖς πλείοσιν αὐτῶν εὐδόκησεν ὁ θεός*.

The substantive, when used with reference to God in the New Testament, denotes always the sovereign fiat of God, the gracious

² § 40 a.

divine decree, the *act* of choice, not the *condition* of satisfaction. Su Mt. 11²⁶ and parallels: οὕτως ἐγένετο εὐδοκία ἔμπροσθέν σου; Eph. 1^{5,9}, κατὰ τὴν εὐδοκίαν τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ, and κατὰ τὴν εὐδοκίαν αὐτοῦ; Phil. 2¹³, ὁ Θεὸς ἐνεργῶν . . . ὑπὲρ τῆς εὐδοκίας. There is but one possible exception, and that is the doubtful clause ἐν ἀνθρώποις εὐδοκίας (or εὐδοκία) of Lk. 2¹⁴, where I take the sense to be ‘the men of God’s gracious *choice*.’

This use of the verb and substantive in all the New Testament seems to me to establish at least a probability in favor of giving to εὐδόκησα in Mk. 1¹¹ and parallels the sense, not of a *condition* of satisfaction, but a free *act* of favor, an unconstrained *choice*. If so, it is perhaps possible with Burton to call it an “inceptive aorist, equivalent to an English perfect,” or, better, with Plummer on the passage in Luke, to call it a “timeless aorist.” But to say that is scarcely more than to say, It is a regular aorist, it refers to a definite event at an undetermined moment of past time. Certainly it should be translated by an English perfect. But the rendering of the English versions, “I am well pleased,” can hardly be regarded as adequate to this sense. To say *I have chosen* is much more than “a vivid way of saying *I am well pleased*.” Nor can we be satisfied to say with Professor Gould³: “The aor. εὐδόκησα, *I came to take pleasure*, denotes the historical process by which God came to take pleasure in Jesus during his earthly life, not the eternal delight of the Father in the Son. . . . It accords with Luke’s statement, that Jesus grew in favor with God and man (Lk. 2⁵²).”

The natural sense, commended by grammar, lexicon, and internal evidence alike, is simply ‘my choice hath fallen upon thee.’ How long ago is not the point; it may be just now, it may be in years past,—the Aorist means it is an act consummated, it fell. The sense is: It has been my gracious sovereign pleasure to choose thee for my Son, the Beloved.

The whole utterance is a condensed paraphrase of the passage which would seem more than any other in Scripture to have expressed to Jesus’ mind the loftiest and purest conception of the Messiah’s office, and which we may therefore naturally consider to have framed to him the language of the Baptismal Vision. The conception is as wide as the poles from John the Baptist’s notion of the Messiah, to whom Weiss and Beyschlag would strangely attribute this vision; but it is just what we might expect of Jesus. The few words bring up the whole figure of that Beloved Servant, or child of

³ *Commentary on Mark*, ad loc.

Jehovah, who is meek and gentle and conquers by speaking the truth in love. The affinity in the language of our texts of the LXX is not so apparent, but notice that which, as quoted in Mt. 12, doubtless comes nearest to the form in which the passage was familiar to Jesus himself :

Ἰδοὺ ὁ παῖς μου ὃν ἤρέτισα
 ὁ ἀγαπητός μου ὃν εὐδόκησεν ἡ ψυχὴ μου.
 [cf. ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός· ἐν σοὶ εὐδόκησα]
 θήσω τὸ πνεῦμά μου ἐπ' αὐτόν,
 καὶ κρίσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν ἀπαγγελεῖ.
 Οὐκ ἐρίσει οὐδὲ κραυγᾶσει,
 οὐδὲ ἀκούσει τις ἐν ταῖς πλατείαις τὴν φωνὴν αὐτοῦ.
 κάλαμον συντετριμμένον οὐ κατεάξει,
 καὶ λίνον τυφόμενον οὐ σβέσει,
 ἕως ἂν ἐκβάλῃ εἰς νίκος τὴν κρίσιν.
 καὶ τῷ ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ ἔθνη ἐλπιουσιν.

But I do not rest my rendering of εὐδόκησα by *I have chosen*, instead of *I have come to take pleasure* or *am well pleased*, on the testimony of grammar, lexicon, and concordance only ; nor even on these *plus* the strong internal probability, based on the overwhelming effect of the words on the mind of the recipient, that they conveyed some startling announcement. It seems to me that we have something to learn also from the six practically parallel passages of the New Testament ; for as such we may surely reckon, besides the synoptic parallels in Mt. 3¹⁷ and Lk. 3²², the three accounts of the **בְּתִלְקָה** at the Transfiguration (Mt. 17⁵ Mk. 9⁷ Lk. 9³⁵) and the reference to the same in 2 Pet. 1¹⁷. The utterance is abbreviated indeed in the Transfiguration story, but 2 Pet. 1¹⁷ is evidence that the meaning was taken to be the same, and we may fairly consider them parallels. Now among these seven there are two variants. 2 Pet. 1¹⁷ has instead of ἐν σοί, εἰς ὃν εὐδόκησα. Certainly the accusative with εἰς is not less favorable than ἐν with the dative to the sense 'on thee my choice hath fallen.' Again, Lk. 9³⁵ has in all critical texts not ὁ ἀγαπητός, but ὁ ἐκλελεγμένος, 'my chosen,' which, if the author was really trying to give the same sense as in the previous case, is certainly significant of what that intended sense must have been, and points to Is. 42¹⁻⁴ as the true underlying passage.

II. ON GAL. iii. 16.

Meyer, Lightfoot, and modern commentators generally seem to me to violate a primary canon of exegesis in their interpretation of

this famous passage. The canon I would express thus: "If the sense proposed by the commentator could be better expressed by some other Greek phraseology than that of the text, it must be assumed that the author would so have written, and the interpretation must be rejected." This does not mean that the New Testament writer always chose the most perfect expression for his thought. He did not. But we are bound to make that presupposition, because any other will throw the reins on the neck of fancy.

Modern commentators generally make the contrast in Gal. 3^{16b} depend upon the use of the collective σπέρμα in Gen. 13¹⁵ instead of τὰ τέκνα, οἱ ἀπόγονοι (so Lightfoot), or some other distributive. If Paul had meant that, he would have written οὐ λέγει, καὶ τοῖς τέκνοις, οὐδέ, τοῖς ἀπογόνους, ὡς ἐπὶ πολλῶν, ἀλλ' ὡς ἐφ' ἑνός, καὶ τῷ σπέρματί σου. What he really writes is this: οὐ λέγει, τοῖς σπέρμασιν, ἀλλὰ τῷ σπέρματι. The way to understand the contrast, therefore, is to ask, What would the meaning have been, according to Paul's conception, if the Scripture had said τοῖς σπέρμασιν?

There are two means of finding out: First, by looking to the conclusion of the argument of which vs.¹⁶ is the thesis. Second, by looking at the parallel passage in Rom. 4.

The seed of Abraham in the promise, says Paul, is not a plurality such as would have been expressed by σπέρματα, but a unity, expressed by σπέρμα. Then he goes on to explain, τοῦτο δὲ λέγω, 'now this is what I mean, the promise looks clear down beyond the law, which was merely a temporary, preparatory discipline for Israel, to believers generally, including the Gentiles, who on their part also had been undergoing a different discipline. These are the "seed." I mean all together in a comprehensive unity, not Jew on one side, Greek on the other; not slave on one side, free on the other; not a σπέρμα Ἰουδαῖον and a σπέρμα Ἑλληνικόν, σπέρμα δοῦλον and σπέρμα ἐλεύθερον, σπέρμα ἄρσεν and σπέρμα θῆλυ; not σπέρματα, but σπέρμα, for ye are all one man in Christ Jesus (πάντες εἰς ἓστε), and if ye are members of Christ, then are ye the seed of Abraham, heirs according to promise.'

It is denied that this can be the collective Christ which is meant. It is said (Meyer) "Χριστός (in vs.¹⁶) is the *personal Christ Jesus*, not as some, following Irenæus and Augustine, have explained it, *Christ and his church*, or *the church* alone. Such a *mystical sense* of Χριστός must necessarily have been suggested by the context (as in 1 Cor. 12¹³); here, however, the very contrast between πολλῶν and ἑνός is against it." I think I have shown that the context does

suggest the "one man, Christ Jesus," of whom both Jews and Gentiles are members, *i.e.* a collective Christ in some sense, though possibly not quite the same sense as Irenæus and Augustine, Beza, Gomarus, Crell, Drusius, Hammond, Locke, Tholuck, Olshausen, Philippi, and Hofmann have argued. I shall now undertake to show from the parallel passages that this is the sense intended.

No one can deny that to Paul, both in Galatians and in Romans, as well as in Ephesians, the abolition of the law by the death of Christ is a subject of rejoicing, not merely because men are brought by it into unity with God by being lifted out of the servile into the filial relation; but also because by its abolition of the great cause of division between Jew and Gentile, men are brought into unity with one another. It is a lifting of the veil as towards God; it is a "breaking down of the middle wall of partition" as towards man. This is expressed in Eph. 2¹⁵, the passage which Lightfoot himself cites as parallel to Gal. 3²⁸: *ἵνα τοὺς δύο κτίσῃ ἐν ἑαυτῷ εἰς ἓνα καινὸν ἄνθρωπον*. The whole passage, 2¹³⁻¹⁶, should be cited as parallel. If there were any doubt as to who this "one new man" is, it would be removed by the further use of the figure in the epistle, where, as in Gal. 3²⁷, we "put on" the new man, grow up into him till the whole body, growing by that which every joint supplieth, maketh increase in love unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ, the collective Christ, the living body which is the earthly temple of the Holy Ghost.

But there may be doubt whether in Ephesians Paul is not using a new figure, not thought of in Galatians. There can be no such doubt in Rom. 4¹⁻¹⁶, where the same argument is made from the same text to the same conclusion, and although stress is no longer laid on the rather fanciful appeal to the use of *σπέρμα* and not *σπέρματα*, the thought is not abandoned, but the conclusion is precisely as in Galatians: "To the end that the promise may be sure to *all* the seed, not to that only which is of the law (the *σπέρμα τοῦ νόμου*), but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham (the *σπέρμα τῆς πίστεως*), who is the father of us *all* (Jews and Gentiles), as it is written, a father of many nations have I made thee."

'The Scripture saith not *σπέρματα* as of *many* seeds, a *σπέρμα τοῦ νόμου*, *i.e.* οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι, and a *σπέρμα τῆς πίστεως*, *i.e.* οἱ Ἕλληνες, but it saith *σπέρμα* as of *one*, *i.e.* Christ, who maketh of the twain in himself one new man. If then ye are members of Christ ye are the *σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ*, heirs according to promise.' This is the argument both in Romans and Ephesians, and we cannot but infer that the thought is the same in Galatians. Those commentators, therefore, who with

Lightfoot, Meyer, *et al.*, make the contrast between σπέρμα and a possible τέκνα or other distributive are wrong. Paul says what he means. The contrast is between σπέρμα, "as of one," the collective καινὸς ἄνθρωπος, "which is Christ;" and σπέρματα, "as of many," which would be a σπέρμα Ἰουδαῖον, τὸ κατὰ τὸν νόμον, and a σπέρμα Ἑλληνικόν, τὸ κατὰ τὴν πίστιν, a σπέρμα τῶν δούλων and a σπέρμα ἐλευθέρων κ.τ.λ., which is not Christ; "for Christ is not divided."